Position Paper on Use of Acadience™ Reading K–6 for Student-Level Accountability Decisions

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The Acadience Reading K–6 measures were developed and validated for the purposes of providing effective support to individual students by way of formative review of instruction and student response to instruction. Because the Acadience Reading measures were designed to provide information to help *support* students, it is not appropriate to use Acadience Reading scores for labeling, tracking, or grading students. Likewise, it is not appropriate to use Acadience Reading for retention and/or promotion decisions. The use of Acadience Reading for retention decisions is especially alarming given the overwhelming information that has been published about the poor outcomes associated with retention. The NASP position statement on Student Grade Retention and Social Promotion is available at:

http://www.nasponline.org/x26820.xml

Another excellent resource that summarizes scientific research on the effects of retention and discusses alternatives and recommendations is the NASP White Paper on Student Grade Retention and Social Promotion available at: https://www.nasponline.org/x32088.xml

The reasons Acadience Reading should not be used for high-stakes decisions for individual children are three-fold:

1. First, the Acadience Reading measures were not validated for such uses. It is important to remember that although the Acadience Reading measures have demonstrated technical adequacy for the purposes of screening and progress monitoring, they are one-minute measures administered at a single point in time. Many factors can impact a child's score, and reliability of the measures is increased by repeated assessment over time (i.e., validating student need for support, progress monitoring within

an Outcomes-Driven Model of educational decision making. See the section on the Outcomes-Driven Model in Chapter 1 of the *Acadience Reading K–6 Assessment Manual* for more information.

2. Second, the Acadience Reading measures were deliberately designed to be brief and efficient indicators of key early literacy skills that are predictive of future reading achievement. While the pattern of performance on Acadience Reading provides important information for making instructional decisions, the Acadience Reading measures were not designed to be comprehensive measures of all reading and literacy skills.

3. Finally, the use of *any* single indicator of competence to make important decisions, such as child retention, grading, or labeling, violates professional standards for educational measurement (AERA, APA, NCME, 2014). The importance of using other relevant information, including multiple forms of assessment, and viewing assessment results within the context of the school cannot be overstated.

To use Acadience Reading data appropriately and effectively to support individual students, it is important that educators have a clear understanding of the conceptual and empirical foundations of the decision-making utility of Acadience Reading benchmark goals. The offical Acadience Reading benchmark goals and cut points for risk are empirically-derived, criterion-referenced scores. The benchmark goals indicate the <u>probability</u> of achieving the next benchmark goal or the likelihood of needing additional instructional support to ensure achievement of future goals. Thus, basing a student's grade or a high-stakes decision on a student's Acadience Reading score (i.e., his/her probability of achieving the next benchmark goal) would be inappropriate. Because the goals and cut scores are based on longitudinal predictive probabilities, they are

not set in stone. For students who score at or above the benchmark goal, the overall likelihood of achieving subsequent reading goals is approximately 80% to 90%, but it is not a guarantee. Within this range, the likelihood of achieving subsequent goals is lower for students whose scores are right at the benchmark goal and increases as scores increase above the benchmark. Most students who meet a benchmark goal will need continued, high-quality instruction to hit the next target. However, the odds are that approximately 20% of students who achieve scores at or above the benchmark goal may still need supplemental support to achieve the next goal.

Scores that fall between the benchmark goal and the cut point for risk represent patterns of performance where approximately 50% of students achieved subsequent literacy goals. Students with scores in this category are likely to benefit from *strategic* planning on the part of educators to determine appropriate strategies to support the students to meet subsequent early literacy goals.

For students whose Acadience Reading scores fall below the cut point for risk, the probability of achieving subsequent goals without additional instructional support is low (i.e., < .20); yet these odds mean that a small percentage of students who score in this range may achieve subsequent benchmark goals anyway. The important use of this risk information is to provide a targeted, intensive intervention with frequent progress monitoring and modification of instruction as needed to ruin the prediction of risk and ensure the student achieves subsequent benchmark goals.

We recommend that educators carefully consider the progress of students on all measures administered, as well as all other information they have about the students, as they evaluate their instruction and make educational decisions to support students.

The greatest value in using Acadience Reading is found in its use as a formative assessment to help teachers and administrators to identify which students are likely to need additional support and to evaluate the effectiveness of that support. We recommend the following practices related to the use of Acadience Reading data as one piece of data to be used in making the following educational decisions:

a. Accurate and early identification of the need for support,

b. Setting ambitious and attainable instructional goals that are meaningful and important,

c. Evaluating progress toward those goals,

d. Modifying instruction as needed for students to make adequate progress,

e. Reviewing outcomes quarterly.

For more information regarding the use of Acadience Reading for individual educational decisions and its use in an Outcomes-Drive Model, see the *Acadience Reading K–6 Assessment Manual*, available for free download from the authors of Acadience Reading at Dynamic Measurement Group, https://acadiencelearning.org/.